

CLAIMS:

1. A method of managing shipping charges for transportation of items by a shipping entity from one or more actual locations of a supplier to customer locations comprising the computer-implemented steps of:
providing first shipping charges related to actual charges by the shipping entity to the supplier for transportation of items by the shipping entity from the one or more actual supplier locations to the customer locations;
providing second shipping charges related to shipping charges for the items calculated by reference to charges applicable to shipment of the items to the customers from one or more virtual supplier locations that are different from the one or more actual supplier locations;
computing differences between the first shipping charges and the second shipping charges; and
utilizing the computed differences in managing shipping charges.
2. A method as in claim 1 in which the one or more actual supplier locations are in a first country and the customer locations are in a second country.
3. A method as in claim 2 in which said items are shipped from the first country to the second country in consolidated international shipments containing packages for groups of said customers, and the consolidated international shipments are divided in the second country into individual shipments to the respective customers.
4. A method as in claim 3 in which the step of providing the second shipping charges comprises utilizing a first table including relationships between weights of items and charges for shipping the respective items.

1 5. A method as in claim 4 in which the step of providing said second charges
2 further comprises utilizing a second table including relationships between
3 shipping charges and zones for said customer locations.

1 6. A method of shipping items from a first country to a customers in a second
2 country and managing shipping charge information comprising the steps of:
3 fulfilling orders in the first country for items for a number of said customers,
4 packaging the items in the first country into individual packages
5 addressed to respective individual customers, and consolidating the
6 individual packages into a collective international shipment;
7 shipping the collective international shipment as a single package to the second
8 country, using a first shipping entity;
9 dividing the collective international shipment in the second country into said
10 individual packages and shipping the individual packages to the
11 respective customers from a location in the second country, using a
12 second shipping entity;
13 providing a first shipping charge related to an actual charge by at least one of the
14 shipping entities;
15 computing a second shipping charge related to applicable charges for shipment
16 of the individual packages from a virtual location in the second country to
17 said customers;
18 computing a difference between the first shipping charge and the second
19 shipping charge; and
20 utilizing said difference.

1 7. A method as in claim 6 in which said first and second shipping entities are the
2 same entity.

- 1 8. A method as in claim 6 in which the providing step comprises providing a first
2 shipping charge that includes an actual charge for shipping the individual
3 packages in the second country.
- 1 9. A method as in claim 8 in which the providing step further includes providing a
2 first shipping charge that includes an actual charge for shipping the collective
3 international shipment from the first country to the second country.
- 1 10. A method as in claim 6 in which said computing a second shipping charge
2 comprises using a table relating shipping charges applicable to shipping from a
3 virtual location to zones of customer locations.
- 1 11. A method as in claim 6 in which said computing a second shipping charge
2 comprises using information regarding weight of the individual packages.
- 1 12. A method as in claim 6 in which said computing a second shipping charge
2 comprises using information regarding both weight of the individual packages
3 and zones of customer locations.
- 1 13. A method as in claim 6 including carrying out the set of steps of fulfilling through
2 computing a second shipping charge for orders related to a first time period, and
3 repeating said set of steps for orders related to successive time periods, and
4 said steps of computing a difference and utilizing the difference comprise
5 computing differences related to a number of said time period and utilizing at
6 least some of said differences.
- 1 14. A system for tracking variances between freight charges that a shipping entity
2 charges a supplier for shipping, from a first country to a second country,
3 consolidated international shipments each containing items ordered by a number

4 of customers located in the second country and for dividing the consolidated
5 shipment into individual shipments to respective customers and delivering same
6 to the customers in the second country, and freight charges the supplier bills to
7 the customers for the delivered individual shipments, comprising:

8 a computer system programmed to receive orders by customers in the second
9 country for items from the supplier, each of said orders identifying at least
10 the customer, the item or items ordered, and an address for the customer
11 in the second country;

12 a database arrangement storing information regarding the freight charges that
13 the shipping entity charges the supplier for shipping the consolidated
14 international shipments and for dividing the consolidated shipments and
15 delivering the individual shipments to the customers, and further storing
16 information regarding local shipping charges applicable to shipping from a
17 virtual location in the second country to respective locations in the second
18 country;

19 said computer system receiving information related to the orders and shipments
20 and utilizing the information received thereby and information from said
21 database, and being programmed to calculate on the basis thereof
22 shipping charges for billing to the customers in amounts that depend on
23 the items in the individual packages and the locations of the customers in
24 the second country; and

25 said computer system further being programmed to calculate differences
26 between charges from the shipping entity to the supplier for a subset of
27 said items and charges billed to the customers for said subset, and
28 present results making use of said differences.

1 15. A system as in claim 13 in which said results comprise results presenting said
2 differences organized at least by time periods longer than a day.

